

Kol Mevasser

PARASHAT TAZRIAH

29 Adar II 5768

April 5, 2008

Kahal Joseph Congregation • 10505 Santa Monica Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90025

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Being Careful with Language

By Rabbi Ralph Tawil

The special gift of human speech is occasionally misused. We should be careful not to say anything that might be damaging about people. This applies even if the statement is true. [If the statement is false, the sin is even worse, now including the sin of lying.] Gossiping and spreading rumors, on the surface seem like very popular activities; however, over time a gossip loses friends and has trouble gaining people's confidence. Let us focus this week on the value of not speaking in damaging ways about people.

Background

The main topic that is discussed in this week's double parasha reading is the malady of "ssara'at" (malignant discoloration of skin or other items). One form of ssara'at was known as "house ssara'at." This phenomenon was characterized by a reddish or greenish discoloration of the house's walls. If the discoloration were spreading, the house would ultimately be destroyed. The Kohanim were the only ones who could pronounce the house as being afflicted with ssara'at. The Torah reflects the owner's careful language when approaching the Kohen to inform him of the situation in his house.

Text

Vayiqra 14:34-35

Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon saying: When you enter the land of Canaan, that I am giving you as a holding, and I place an affliction of ssara'at on a house in the land of your holding, there shall come the one whose house it is and report to the priest, saying: (Something) like an affliction has been seen by me on the house!

Torat Kohanim Messora 5:10

"Affliction" (would suffice.) What is scripture teaching by saying "like an affliction?" That even

PRAYER SCHEDULE

SHABBAT TAZRIA

Parashat HaHodesh

28 Adar II / Friday, April 4th

Shabbat Candlelighting6:59 pm
Minhah & Arvith6:30 pm
Board Installation Dinner 7:00 pm

29 Adar II / Shabbat, April 5th

Shaharith8:30 am
Minhah & Arvith6:30 pm
Motzei Shabbat 7:55 pm

1 Nissan / Sunday, April 6th

Shaharith7:30 am
Talmud Torah 10:00 am

Monday through Thursday

Shaharith6:30 am
Talmud Torah Tues./Thurs.4:00 pm
Healthy You! A Nurturing Evening for Women
Wednesday, April 9th8:00 pm

SHABBAT METZORAH

6 Nissan / Friday, April 11th

Shabbat Candlelighting7:04 pm
Minhah & Arvith6:30 pm

if he was learned and he knew that it was a ssara'at affliction, he should not decree and say "an affliction" rather "like an affliction."

Analysis

The Kohen would pronounce the house's ssara'at status, because the Kohanim were the repository of information that was needed to determine the status of the phenomenon. Therefore, the owner, even if he is very knowledgeable, can only say "something like an affliction... and not declare it affliction."

The owner did not want to overstep the Kohen's authority. He simply was not authorized to make the determination. In a homiletic vein, the homeowner is careful not to give "damaging" information about the house, when he is not certain about its truth.

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Some hakhamim understood the reason ssara'at as being the punishment for speaking in a damaging way about people. They have the Kohen speak tough words when the homeowner comes to report his house's ssara'at.

“Saying:...”—The kohen should speak words of reproof saying: “My son, ssara'at comes because of damaging language (lashon hara') [the midrash brings a proof from Deuteronomy 24:8-9 which mentions Miriam's ssara'at that she received after speaking disparagingly about Moshe.]

There are also those who understand the Hebrew word “Messora” as hinting towards the words “Mossi shem Ra” (slanderer).

The person who has ssara'at is removed from the city and must walk around with torn garments and wild hair crying out “impure, impure.” In short, he is kept away from people and is removed from the normal society.

Discussion

Why is it important not to speak in a damaging way about people? Speaking in a damaging way can hurt people from afar. It changes other's perception of him in such a way that it is very hard to change it back. How do we feel when someone speaks badly about us?

What should we do when we hear someone speaking in a damaging way about another? One should remember that we are not allowed to hear this kind of talk. We should try to change the subject. If we cannot do that, we must not accept the gossiper's words as authenticated truth. What is the other side of the story? --In certain situations, we might try to defend the person.

Why do people speak in a damaging way about others? They think it boosts their own image and ego. They know that some people enjoy hearing bad things about people. They want to be popular with that group.

As stated above the consequence of having ssara'at is isolation. Although ssara'at does not exist today, one might still suffer the isolation that comes from spreading rumors and damaging

words about people. Isolation can lead to the gossiper being isolated, instead of becoming more popular. Since everyone knows that the gossiper is going to spread any information around, people will stop taking them into confidence and sharing intimate secrets with for fear that their confidences will be broken. Sharing confidence builds close relationships. Having no close relations can lead to isolation.

Western society contains many instances where people spread damaging information about others. There are even sections of newspapers known as “gossip columns.”

Bne Yisrael, who follow the enlightened teachings of the Torah and the insights of its wise sages, keep far away from those who speak damagingly about people. Instead, Bne Yisrael concerns itself with words of truth, wisdom and Torah.

Are there situations when a person must speak damagingly about a person? Yes. When the knowledge is first hand and the person receiving the information needs it to protect himself from being harmed. For example, if we have first hand information that a certain person cheated us, and we hear that one of our friends is entering into a partnership with him we are allowed to warn him. The warning must describe the event as we know it and not an exaggeration of the event.

Whenever we speak about people, even if it is to praise a person, we must be careful that it would not damage him. How can praising a person sometimes be damaging? —It could lead some jealous people to mention his faults in order to “cut him down to size.” *Shabbat Shalom*

Healthy You!

A Nurturing Evening for Women
Wednesday, April 9th at 8 pm

Learn from health experts!

- Michelle Mor, *Nutritionist*
- Veronica Saunders, *Chef, Food Specialist & Trainer*
- Olinda, *Personal Trainer*

In Memoriam

These anniversaries occur from Shabbat, the Shabbat, the 29th of Adar II (April 5, 2008) to Shabbat, the 7th of Nissan (April 12, 2008). It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend services in honor of loved ones. *Entries with an asterisk lack contact names, to add information please call 310-474-0559.*

Shabbat / 29 Adar II

Lulu bat Matooka
Mordechai ben Yehuda

Sunday / 1 Nissan

Sadik Salah ben Ezra Zakoo Halevi

Monday / 2 Nissan

Aharon Yosef Eliyahu ben Amouma
Sara bat Khatoon

Tuesday / 3 Nissan

Hilwa Farha bat Tiffahah Ezair*
Naim ben Sasson

Thursday / 5 Nissan

Moshe ben Shemuel Somekh

Friday / 6 Nissan

Mordechai ben Mattatya*
Edmond ben Moshe Somekh

Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored by

Jennifer & Robert Shiri

in honor of their babynaming

Mazal Tov

to the grandparents

Widad & Moshi Shiri

Linda & Jimmy Ischayek

Refuah Shlemah

Please include these people in your prayers for health.

Khayah Noa bat Sara • Matilda Louisa

Victor ben Pauline • Haim ben Mordechai

Shaul Chai Gavriel ben Sara

Shamuel Eliyahu ben Hannah

To update this list e-mail dafna@kahaljoseph.org

TORAH READINGS

Special Reading, Parashat Hahodesh p. 253

Parashat Tazriah p. 459

Haftara p. 1001

*We offer our heartfelt
condolences to the family of*

Ike Ezekiel, z"l

to his wife, Molly, to his children,

Melvyn, Steven, Michael, & Gloria

his daughters-in-law, Naomi, Sarah,

and Vivian, and his grandchildren,

Adam, Darren, Laura, Jonathan,

Stephanie, Hannah, David, Ariel,

and Esther.

Congratulations to Kahal Joseph's Incoming Board of Directors

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